

Message Text

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ORIGIN IO-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 212027

UNESCO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UNESCO, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL-UNESCO RELATIONS

1. DURING AUGUST 18 MEETING WITH IO DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY HELMAN, ISRAELI EMBASSY COUNSELLOR BENTSUR
RAISED WHAT HE TERMED A "DISTURBING" SITUATION RE-
GARDING UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL M'BOW'S POSITION ON
ISRAELI-HELD ARAB TERRITORIES. BENTSUR SAID THAT
ALTHOUGH THE ISRAELIS HAD EXPECTED MR. M'BOW TO SUBMIT
A MILD REPORT ON THIS QUESTION, RELYING ON MATERIAL
SUPPLIED BY ISRAEL, HE WAS NOW MAKING VERY HARD
DEMANDS ON ISRAEL. M'BOW HAD RECENTLY GIVEN THE
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ISRAELIS A NOTE DEMANDING THAT A UNESCO DELEGATION
BE SENT TO THE TERRITORIES AND WAS ALSO INSISTING
THAT A PERMANENT UNESCO REP BE SENT TO THE AREA.
BENTSUR LEFT COPY OF M'BOW NOTE WHICH IS BEING
TRANSLATED AND WILL BE POUCHED TO ADDRESSEES. BENTSUR
AND ISRAELIS WERE CONCERNED BECAUSE THEY DETECTED IN-
CREASING INCLINATION ON M'BOW'S PART TO "AGGRAVATE

UNESCO RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL." BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, BENTSUR NOTED THAT M'BOW HAD SENT THE ISRAELIS TWO NOTES IN MARCH 1978 REGARDING POLITICAL DETAINEES AND ELECTIONS IN THE TERRITORIES, BOTH OF WHICH WERE

CONFUSING AND RAISED UNACCEPTABLE DEMANDS ON THE ISRAELIS. IN ONE CASE, FOR EXAMPLE, M'BOW HAD DEMANDED THAT UNESCO SUPERVISE MATRICULATION EXAMINATIONS IN ISRAELI PRISONS. ADDITIONALLY, IN THE SECOND HALF OF JUNE, ISRAEL HAD RECEIVED A LETTER SIGNED BY M'BOW IN WHICH "RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY" WERE REFERRED TO AS THE LEGAL BASIS FOR SENDING UNESCO DELEGATIONS TO ISRAELI-HELD TERRITORIES AND IN WHICH IT WAS CLAIMED THAT IT WAS WITHIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL TO DEMAND SPECIFIC INFORMATION AS TO WHAT WAS BEING DONE REGARDING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL MATTERS IN THE TERRITORIES.

2. BENTSUR SAID ISRAELIS WERE PUZZLED AS TO WHAT HAD LED M'BOW TO SEND SUCH NOTES WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION. DURING EARLIER DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM, M'BOW HAD AGREED TO CONSULT WITH THE ISRAELIS AND DISCUSS ORALLY WITH THEM PROBLEMS THAT THE ARABS WERE RAISING. FOR THEIR PART, THE ISRAELIS PROMISED TO BE COOPERATIVE AND TO PROVIDE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS THEY COULD.
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ISRAEL HAD TRIED TO REVERSE THIS TREND AND IN FACT HAD SENT ONE OF THEIR FORMER AMBASSADORS TO TALK WITH M'BOW IN HOPES OF FINDING OUT WHY HE WAS TAKING THIS NEW TACK. THE REPORT THEY RECEIVED FROM THEIR AMBASSADOR WAS DISCOURAGING - M'BOW HAD SAID HE STOOD BY THE CONTENTS OF THE NOTE HE HAD SENT IN JUNE.

3. HELMAN ASKED BENTSUR WHY ISRAELIS THOUGHT M'BOW WAS TAKING A HARDER LINE WITH THEM. BENTSUR RESPONDED THAT, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT SURE, THEY BELIEVED M'BOW SAW HIMSELF IN THE RUNNING FOR THE UN SECRETARY GENERALSHIP AND FELT HE HAD TO ADOPT A MORE STRIDENT POSITION TOWARD ISRAEL IN ORDER TO GAIN THIRD-WORLD AND ARAB SUPPORT. BENTSUR POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH ISRAELIS HAD ON PRINCIPLE REJECTED ALL UNESCO RESOLUTIONS CONDEMNING ISRAEL, THEY HAD BEEN COOPERATIVE WITH UNESCO; FOR EXAMPLE, THEY AGREED TO M'BOW'S REQUEST TO SEND A DELEGATION OF EXPERTS TO THE TERRITORIES LAST DECEMBER. THE VISIT HAD TURNED OUT WELL, ACCORDING TO GOI ASSESSMENT.

4. BENTSUR SAID HE MERELY WANTED TO BRING THESE

MATTERS TO OUR ATTENTION AND THAT IF WE HAD ANY VIEWS,
THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE THEM. HELMAN
UNDERTOOK TO CHECK INTO THIS.

5. ANY COMMENTS MISSION MAY HAVE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
CHRISTOPHER

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